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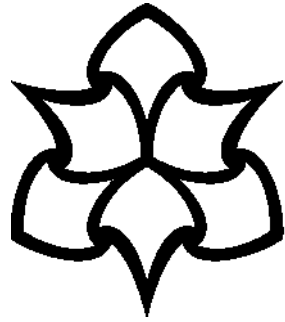
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GRANDMENTORS REVIEW

FINAL REPORT

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

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OCTOBER 2017

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Much attention is currently being paid, both in policy and social work practice, to developing and improving support services for young people leaving care. The UK government's latest strategy – *Keep on caring: supporting young people from care to independence* (HMG, 2016) – recognises that care leavers are one of the most vulnerable groups in the UK. One type of support that is increasingly of interest to policy makers and social work practitioners is that of mentoring, an example of which is the Grandmentors (GM) programme delivered by Volunteering Matters. GM delivers intergenerational mentoring programmes for young people transitioning from care. The programme involves a mentor, who will typically be aged 50 years or over, and a mentee who will typically be aged 17-24.

In June 2017, Volunteering Matters commissioned the Policy Evaluation and Research Unit at Manchester Metropolitan University to undertake a review of the Grandmentors programme. The aims of this review were to revise and update the evidence base underlying the programme; draw out the implications of this extant evidence for the design of the intervention, and the delivery of the programme; identify what makes for an effective mentoring programme; determine the elements of the Grandmentors programme that are considered to be effective; and understand how the evidence base and the future development of the programme fits the with strategic and commissioning intentions of current and future commissioners. The review comprises a synthesis of academic literature, in the form of a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA), combined with dialogue with 17 strategic informants, 14 mentors, and seven mentees. There is a particular focus on the benefits and impact of intergenerational mentoring for young people leaving care, with attention paid to what constitutes good value for money given the current constrained and competitive funding environment.

Findings indicate that despite positive changes brought to policies in recent years, service provision is negatively impacted by budgetary cuts and heavy workloads. Policy priorities for the strategic informants interviewed for this review include accommodation, employment, education, emotional and mental health, relationships, and innovation. The review also identified that commissioners pay attention to four key issues when considering whether to commission services such as a mentoring programme: its consistency with the organisation's goals and vision; the sustainability of relationships between mentors and mentees and funding; the quality of the organisation and its external relationships; and value for money.

According to the interviewees, the key positive features of Grandmentors are its intergenerational component (i.e., mentors who are mature, available, and reliable) and its capacity to provide bridges to normal community life. All strategic informants agreed that the programme was appropriate for care leavers who first and foremost expressed an interest in having a mentor, and as such that motivation is central to successful mentorships. It was noted that the programme's processes give care leavers the opportunity to opt out on various occasions before a referral is made. It was also noted that the programme is probably not suited for care leavers going through a very chaotic phase or are experiencing a period of crisis.

Most strategic informants suggested that the best time to enrol care leavers in a mentoring programme would be six months before their 18th birthday, which is when service provision drops drastically. The length of the intervention can be short (i.e., six months) if purposeful. It was recognised that the mechanisms through which the programme operates include mentor qualities (e.g., honesty, persistence, and being assertive, positive and non-judgemental), and a high quality mentor-mentee relationship that requires natural chemistry, builds on trust, and offers socio-emotional support.

As Grandmentors is expanding into other areas, different models are emerging. The programme is designed to be embedded in broader services. Here, the coordinator works closely with the social care team in order to ensure referrals are made to the programme. Grandmentors has strong processes in place when it comes to referrals, recruitment and training of mentors, and matching processes. Nevertheless, there are local variations regarding the length of training and the extent to which mentors engage with other services.

It would be difficult to attribute impact to the Grandmentors programmes as care leavers are often involved in numerous other services, and the underlying principles of the programme (flexibility, confidentiality, mentor being out of the system) make it difficult to work towards set outcomes. Nonetheless, the programme monitors outcomes related to education, employment and training, as well as confidence and well-being. Other positive outcomes mentioned by interviewees include care leavers being more confident to express their concerns, more likely to find work or go to college, making better use of public transport, and having better mental health and greater aspirations.

The review findings brought to light a number of implications for the Grandmentors programme. Several of these relate to the ‘positioning’ of the programme, both externally and internally. The review identified differences of opinion, or lack of clarity, around the nature of mentoring (versus befriending), its place within services for young people leaving care (versus being out of the system), and whether differences between mentors (typically White British and middle class) and mentees (more and increasingly diverse in terms of their background) have an impact on the outcomes achieved through mentoring.

The need for greater mentee choice was also identified as an important implication from the review. Currently, the matching process does not involve much choice for mentees who, typically, are presented with a matched mentor at the end of the matching process. Finally, there are differences between local Grandmentors schemes in how the programme is managed and delivered, and some areas where more standardised procedures might be valuable. This suggests that some operational work on policies and procedures might be needed to support the development and expansion of the programme.

The review concludes by making strategic and operational recommendations around the future development and expansion of the programme, including:

Strategic

Funding and expansion – an organic, evolutionary and targeted approach to expanding the programme is likely to be a more successful and sustainable approach. Based on findings from the interviews with strategic informants, a map of the current provision concerning mentoring programmes for care leavers could inform the expansion plan.

Evidence and outcomes – using the extant evidence base more strategically in terms of communicating the effectiveness of mentoring and of the Grandmentors programme. Over and above the extant evidence, it was also recognised that more work needed to be done to demonstrate outcomes arising from the programme.

The nature of mentoring as an intervention and as delivered through Grandmentors – more work is needed to distil and communicate the core of mentoring as an intervention and what it means for the programme; this means some work in terms of clarity of understanding and purpose of goal setting, and also the relationship between Grandmentors and the wider system of services for young people leaving care.

Policies and procedures – while flexibility afforded to local schemes has been key to the success of the programme to date, it would both limit and also present a number of challenges as the programme expands. Some systematic guidance and procedures were needed to support the expansion programme.

Operational

Entering, exiting and ending the mentor/mentee relationship – develop a more formalised and articulated process around the referral and assessment process, recognising investment made in this process, the role it played both in the process of matching mentors and mentees, and to the outcomes achieved through mentoring.

Choice – mentees should have choice and ownership over decisions around how and by whom mentoring is delivered to them, with different approaches being trialled.

Mentor training and support – build on the formal training programme as part of the recruitment process. Work is needed to identify mentors' ongoing training and support needs, and to develop a more systematic training programme and perhaps a buddying scheme.

Local boards – more consideration was needed toward service user voice on these boards, and particularly whether former mentees might be recruited as board members and/or on some user voice forum.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Grandmentors (GM) programme delivers intergenerational mentoring programmes for young people transitioning from care. The programmes involve a mentor, who will typically be aged 50 years or over and a mentee who will typically be aged 17-24. The programme recruits older volunteers aged 50 and over to use their life experience and skills so as to provide emotional and practical support to young people transitioning from the care system to independent living. Established in 2009, the Grandmentors programme was jointly developed by Volunteering Matters and the Jecda Foundation,

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In June 2017, Volunteering Matters commissioned the Policy Evaluation and Research Unit at Manchester Metropolitan University to undertake a review of the Grandmentors programme. The review was funded by Nesta and DCMS as part of the Second Half Fund and was completed between June and September 2017 by Dr Chris O’Leary, Dr Jessica Ozan, and Andrew Bradbury. The report and recommendations outlined here represent the final part of this review, the purpose of which was twofold. First, the review aimed to hone the design of the Grandmentors operating model, assessing its benefits and limitations, in order to ensure alignment with current and potential commissioner priorities. Secondly, the review aimed to lay the groundwork for national expansion of the programme, ensuring growth at an effective and impactful pace. This expansion is a fundamental part of the five-year vision for the Grandmentors programme; to support care leavers to successful transition, providing support to over 2,900 young people leaving care across 20 local authorities in England.

1.1 LEAVING CARE POPULATION

Young adults who leave care enter a crucial period of their lives, in which they plan and prepare for their future (National Audit Office [NAO], 2015). During this period of transition, young adults leaving care face significant challenges and often achieve poorer outcomes than other young adults (Adley and Jupp Kina, 2017). Indeed, young people leaving care are known to experience, or be likely to experience, significant social problems. Evidence demonstrates that young people with a history of local authority care have poorer social outcomes in adulthood when compared with peers who have not been under local authority care (HM Government, 2016). Recent estimates suggest that individuals with a history of being in care are represented disproportionately in the homeless population, the teenage parent population, and in the criminal justice system (DfE 2016). Moreover, increasing numbers of young people leaving care is placing an unprecedented demand upon services, particularly those with statutory responsibilities. Around 70,000 children are currently in the care system, around 60 per cent of whom were taken into care because of abuse or neglect (DfE, 2016). In the year ending March 2015, around 10,800 young people aged 16 or over left care. This represents an increase of 40 per cent over the last decade (HM Government, 2016). The number of late entrants (i.e., young people who entered care at 16 years old or over) has also increased, from 12 per cent of those



entering care in 2011 to 16 per cent in 2015 (HM Government, 2016: 14). In addition to late entrants, evidence suggests that those entering the care system increasingly have complex needs and there are also increased numbers of asylum seekers. In relation to the latter, the Department for Education states that the number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children has increased significantly in recent years, and now represents some six per cent of all looked-after children (DfE, 2016). A care leaver is a young person between 16 and 18, who has previously been in care, but is no longer legally “looked after”¹ by the relevant local authority Children’s Services. Young people can stay in care until 18 (or slightly longer under a Staying Put Arrangement). In fact, children’s Services still have a duty to support young people until the age of 21, or 25 if they are in full-time education or have a disability. The care leaver cohort has changed in recent years, which represents new challenges for service providers. Similarly, demand for care is growing and varies across the country. In recent years, there has been a steady increase in the number of looked-after children each year since 2008 (DfE, 2016). A number of different reasons are suggested for this increase, including: (1) changes to law, which mean that 16 and 17-year-olds who present as homeless become looked-after children, and increasing numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (HM Government, 2016); (2) the effect and response to widely reported abuse cases (such as Rotherham) and the Baby P case (NAO, 2014); and (3) wider policy changes around young people in care.

1.2 POLICY AND WIDER CONTEXT

In recent years, much attention has been paid, both in policy and social work practice, to developing and improving support services for young people during this transition period. The UK government has published a number of strategies aimed at improving the support given to care leavers during their transition to independent living (i.e., first cross-government care leaver strategy in 2013, introduction of Staying Put duty in 2014). The UK government’s latest strategy (Keep on Caring) recognises that care leavers are one of the most vulnerable groups in the UK; their outcomes being much worse than the general population, and the quality of leaving care services varies greatly between different local authorities (HM Government, 2016). The strategy identifies outcomes that will support the achievement of five key outcomes to support care leavers, namely: (1) be better prepared for independent living; (2) improve their access to education, employment and training; (3) experience stability in their lives, feeling safe and secure; (4) improve access to health support, including mental health; and (5) achieve financial stability.

Furthermore, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced the requirement for each local authority to publish local offers for care leavers (i.e., information about services available to support their transition to adulthood and independent living). It also requires local authorities

¹ A child is “looked after” by a council when the court granting a care order gives that council legal parental responsibility for the child. Children may also be in care under a voluntary arrangement between the child’s parents/guardians and the relevant council.



to provide Personal Advisors to care leavers until the age of 25. A Personal Advisor's (PA's) role is to provide advice and support; to participate in the assessment to access mainstream services, preparation, and review of the pathway plan; to coordinate and facilitate access to them, and to keep informed about the young person's progress and well-being as outlined in the Children Leaving Care Act 2000.

One type of support that is increasingly of interest to policy makers and social work practitioners is that of mentoring; Philip and Spratt (2007), for example, suggest that mentoring is an emerging infrastructure in the UK policy context, with government investing in a range of mentoring programmes. Despite this recent growth in interest, mentoring is not a recent intervention aimed at young people. Dolan and Brady (2011) suggest that mentoring as a means of assisting at-risk youth has been developed over the last century, initially in the US via initiatives such as the Big Brothers/Big Sisters programme. Mentoring programmes for young people in or leaving care usually draw on the assumption that the challenges they encounter are "at least partially related to the lack of strong, healthy, and stable relationships, which are key ingredients for any adolescents' successful transition to adulthood" (Spencer et al., 2010: 226).

Mentoring comes in many forms, and is defined (often poorly) in a number of ways. Differences can be identified in terms of whether the mentoring relationship is planned, the extent to which it is formalised, whether the relationship is one-to-one or group-based, and differences between peer, intergenerational, and intentional. Some definitions emphasise the voluntary engagement of young people, while others focus on how the mentor is supposed to guide a mentee towards achieving personal growth and development (Dolan and Brady, 2011). Philip (1997 cited in Philip, Shucksmith and King, 2004: 4) defines mentoring in very broad terms as "a process within a relationship or set of relationships that embodies elements of trust, reciprocity, challenge, support, and control and which has the power to empower partners". Specifically, intergenerational mentoring (which is the focus of this research) can be thought of as "the relationship between a young person (mentee) and an older person (mentor) who is not related to them" (Dolan and Brady, 2011: 10). Likewise, intergenerational mentoring forms a small part of more general intergenerational programmes (Fox et al., 2013), which are defined as "vehicles for the purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations for individual and social benefits" (Hatton-Yeo and Ohsako, 2000: 3).

Whilst mentoring is not new in child welfare practice, there has been increasing interest in formal and informal mentoring programmes designed to support care leavers during this period of transition (Avery, 2011). Programmes traditionally match a young person with an adult with whom they will meet regularly. Peer mentoring can also take place, where a young person who has transitioned out of foster care into independent living mentors another young person still in care. Other programmes use alternative methods such as online mentoring where mentee and mentor communicate through regular emails (Spencer et al., 2010).

1.3 AIMS OF THE REVIEW

The review aimed to:

1. Revise and update the evidence base underlying the programme.
2. Contribute to that evidence base, to improve other mentoring programmes and other services for young people leaving care.
3. Draw out the implications of this extant evidence for the design of the intervention, and the delivery of the programme.
4. Identify how the Grandmentors programme might be further developed to take account of current evidence.
5. Engage with commissioners and other key stakeholders, including potential future commissioners, to understand how the evidence base and the future development of the programme fits with strategic and commissioning intentions.
6. Agree a set of practical and evidence-based actions for the future development of the programme and expansion of Grandmentors beyond Hounslow, Kent and Islington.

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The primary research question was:

1. What must a high performing/impactful care leaver mentoring model include and why?

To investigate this further, we addressed the following questions:

2. At what point in a young person's life is it likely that mentoring would have the most positive impact when leaving care?
3. Does the intensity and duration of the mentoring intervention have an impact on outcomes achieved?
4. How does the impact of mentoring differ in terms of area of focus, with reference to education, employment and training, self-care skills, family and social relationships, and managing finances?
5. To what extent do mentors integrate with, and differ to, other services involved in the young person's life?
6. For whom does the Grandmentors programme prove most effective?
7. What are the barriers to mentees engaging with the Grandmentors programme?
8. What additional benefits are offered by intergenerational mentoring for care leavers?



1.4 METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The review comprises a synthesis of academic literature in the form of a Rapid Evidence Assessment, combined with dialogue with relevant sector stakeholders, to provide a detailed understanding of the characteristics of high functioning community initiatives such as Grandmentors, along with the effectiveness of the current delivery model for the programme. There is a particular focus on the benefits and impact of intergenerational mentoring for young people leaving care, with attention paid to what constitutes good value for money given the current constrained and competitive funding environment.

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The review involved four work phases:

Scoping phase. An initial piece of work during the first week of the project, which involved a project initiation meeting between Volunteering Matters and the research team, to confirm project scope, approach, and delivery arrangements.

Research phase. This stage comprised two main elements: a non-impact Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA)² of the extant literature within the field and interviews with a number of key strategic stakeholders. The REA utilises a narrative synthesis approach in order to provide a solid and robust evidential base to underpin the further development and expansion of the Grandmentors programme. The interviews were conducted before the REA was completed to help frame the search criteria used, as well as help the research team gain a wider understanding of the context within which this research was being conducted. The REA was produced as a standalone report and is set out in Appendix 3 of this report. Its key findings are also presented alongside findings from the primary research undertaken for this review.

Discussion phase. This involved a combination of telephone and face-to-face interviews with current and previous mentors and mentees, along with other relevant stakeholders, such as Grandmentors project officers.

Findings phase. At this stage, the research team and the Volunteering Matters team met for a round-table discussion of the research findings, to identify implications and recommendations for current and future programmes. This provided an opportunity to discuss and frame future research and evaluation, along with capitalisation on innovation and experimentation in the long-term development and expansion of the Grandmentors programme. Once completed, this final report was produced.

² One of the key issues with research in this field is the lack of robust empirical studies that measure the impact of mentoring as an intervention. Typically, REAs focus on studies that measure impact.

The review involved engagement with 14 mentors, seven mentees and 17 strategic informants. A list of strategic informants is provided in Appendix 1. Approval was granted under MMU's research ethics system to conduct these interviews (approval number A&H1617-61).

Interviews were recorded³ and contemporaneous notes taken. Interviews were then written up in full for analysis, which used a thematic approach. Given the small pool of research participants and to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, this report only refers to broad definitional categories (strategic informants, mentors, mentees). To provide a sense of the weight of evidence generated by this review, the findings section includes details of the source of the evidence (REA, strategic participants, mentors/mentees) and also the extent to which each theme is important in terms of interviews; whether the theme or issue is identified by one interviewee, by some or a few (less than half), many or most (more than half), or all of the interviewees. The review also considered the minutes of 19 Grandmentors Project Board meetings and 10 case studies provided by Volunteering Matters.

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The review was conducted over a very short period, and over the summer of 2017. The research team engaged with over 30 individuals with direct experience of the Grandmentors programme – as mentors and mentees, as current and potential commissioners, and as individuals working with or for Volunteering Matters. It should be noted that only a small number of potential commissioners were involved, and there was limited engagement with the wider policy community around young people leaving care. Participants were selected using convenience sampling methods, and may not be representative of the wider population of stakeholders involved in commissioning, delivering, or accessing mentoring programmes or wider services for young people leaving care. It should also be emphasised that this was not an evaluation of the programme, and the research presented here was not intended to identify the extent to which the programme was effective or the programme's features that might contribute or create barriers to its effectiveness.

Also involved was a systematic, focused assessment of the available empirical evidence around mentoring programmes for young people leaving care. Overwhelmingly, this empirical evidence is qualitative in nature, and there are no available studies that seek to measure the impact of mentoring programmes compared to other interventions/not providing mentoring. This is a significant limitation in the extant empirical evidence, and has important implications both for commissioners faced with reducing budgets and increasing demands (and who therefore might be looking to focus on interventions supported by evidence of impact and cost effectiveness); and for Volunteering Matters as it works towards establishing an evidence base to underpin its plans to develop and expand the Grandmentors programme.

³ Interviews were recorded with the consent of participants. A small number of participants did not give their consent to be recorded. In these cases, the researcher involved made contemporaneous notes and the interview write up was based only on these notes.

2. KEY FINDINGS

This section presents the key findings based on interviews with strategic informants, mentors and mentees, the Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA), and documentary analysis of minutes of the Grandmentors Project Board meetings. First, it sets the general context for Grandmentors through identifying policy priorities, considering service provision, and outlining commissioners' objectives. Second, key features of the programme are considered such as the added value of intergenerational mentoring and the programme's ability to provide bridge to normal community life. Third, this section explores aspects of the interventions that are crucial to its success such as its target population, the best time to enrol care leavers, and the duration of the intervention. Fourth, aspects of the programme's implementation that are deemed challenging are discussed. They include referrals, the recruitment and training of mentors, the matching process, the support provided to mentors and mentees as well as the level of engagement mentors have with other services. Fifth, it considers causal mechanisms that support a successful mentoring programme. Sixth, outcomes and impact are discussed. Finally, it considers issues related to scalability of the programme.

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2.1 COMMISSIONING SERVICES FOR CARE LEAVERS

2.1.1 POLICY PRIORITIES

Throughout the review, engagement with key stakeholders and relevant literature yielded a number of policy priorities relevant to young people leaving care. They include accommodation, employment, education, relationships, emotional and mental health, and innovation. Whilst criminal justice is also an important policy area for care leavers, the focus here remains on the priorities identified by the strategic informants involved in this review. Findings from the interviews conducted with mentors and mentees, as well as the REA, are brought together in order to provide an integrated account of the wider discussion.

The figure below illustrates the six priority areas identified through the stakeholder interviews. These six priority areas were also, to a greater or lesser extent, also identified in other evidence generated by this review. In the diagram below, the type and weight of evidence for each of the priority areas is identified. For reference, 'S' represents strategic stakeholders, 'M' represents mentor and mentee interviews, and 'R' relates to the Rapid Evidence Assessment undertaken as part of the wider review. The number of asterisks highlights the extent to which this particular issue featured in this aspect of the research project, both in terms of how often it was mentioned and also how important it was considered for those who referred to it. Three asterisks indicate the policy area was a significant topic in the interviews or literature reviewed for the REA, two asterisks means that the topic was present without being prominent, and one asterisk signifies that the area was rarely discussed.

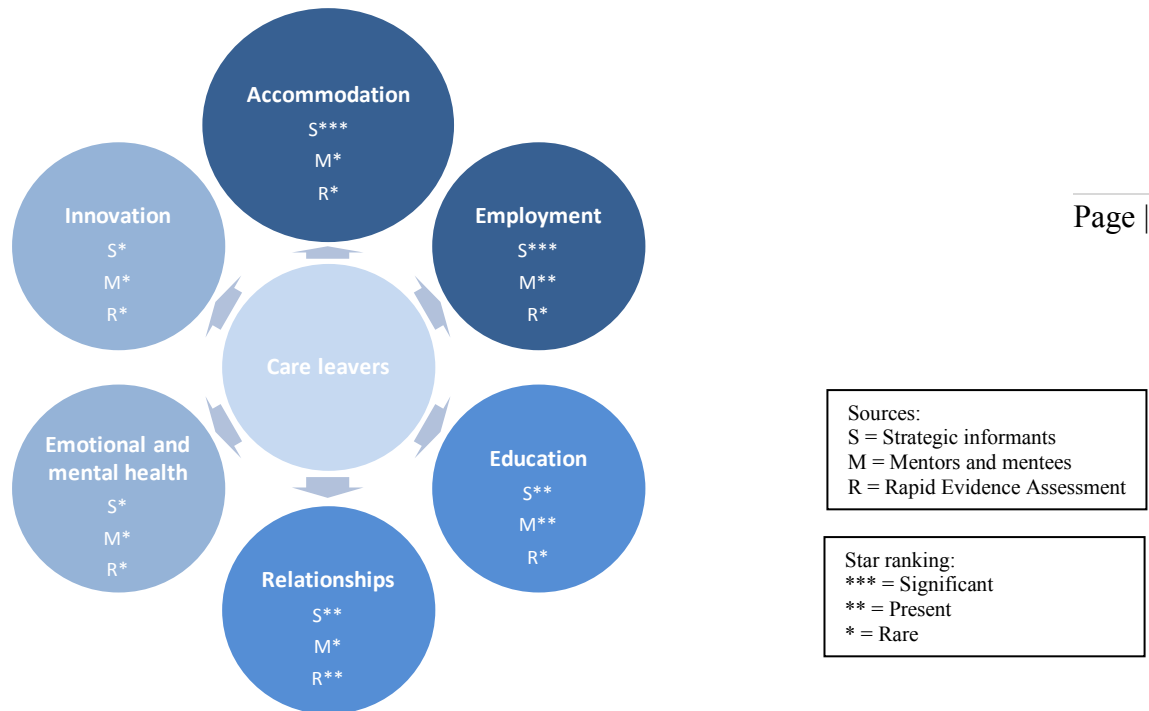


Figure 1: Key policy priorities for care leavers

Accommodation

Accommodation was clearly the strongest policy priority for most of the strategic informants interviewed for this review, whom identified it as the biggest challenge faced by care leavers. Indeed, access to affordable and safe accommodation when leaving foster or residential care is perceived as the most fundamental gap in service provision by most strategic informants. Some pointed out that this challenge is even greater in London as the rents are much higher than the national average. However, many strategic informants indicated that beyond access to affordable and safe accommodation, care leavers face the challenge of retaining their tenancy. Some of them will struggle to remain in their accommodation as they do not have the skills and competencies required for independent living. Interestingly, accommodation was not a prominent topic amongst mentors and mentees; some of them mentioned the skills required to live independently. The REA pointed out that mentoring programmes could contribute towards learning independent living skills (Greeson et al., 2015), or obtaining accommodation (Mendes, 2011).



Employment

Employment was mentioned as an important policy priority by most of the strategic informants interviewed for this review. Some local authorities try to engage with local business to create opportunities for care leavers. There is the recognition amongst some of the interviewees that care leavers may require additional support when entering employment or training.

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One strategic informant pointed out that, as a Corporate Parent, councils need to raise awareness amongst employers about care leavers. Some strategic informants indicated that care leavers might benefit from support from mentors when transitioning towards employment, particularly in terms of CV writing and job applications. This is consistent with findings from the REA (Munson et al., 2010). Furthermore, interviews with mentors and mentees confirm that this is an area of importance and need.

Education

A number of strategic informants indicated that education was a challenge for some care leavers. For instance, asylum seekers do not necessarily know what is on offer. Some strategic informants also indicated that apprenticeship might be better suited to care leavers than university because it allows them to earn an income whilst studying. Whilst the number of young people that are Not in Employment, Education, or Training has decreased since 2011 (Powell, 2017), a strategic informant noted that there is still a strong focus on vulnerable groups such as care leavers, in terms of education. Several strategic informants indicated that mentors can support care leavers to remain in education. This is supported by the REA, which established that mentoring programmes improve attitudes towards education (Greeson and Bowen, 2008). Education was more prominent in the mentors' and mentees' discourse than that of strategic informants, as most mentees interviewed indicated that the Grandmentors programme supported them with education and training needs.

Relationships

Several strategic informants noted a shift in policy in recent years that has seen a stronger focus given on good, strong, loving and continuous relationships for care leavers. Whilst the need for healthy and sustainable relationships has always been understood by practitioners, it is now becoming evident in new policy arrangements such as Staying Put or the introduction of a Personal Advisor. Some strategic informants agreed that a mentoring programme fits well with this type of priority. However, others pointed out that the government's priority is to expand and maintain relationships that young people have established with professionals, such as independent visitors or foster parents, whilst they were in care. Some of those relationships continue informally in any case. One strategic informant also mentioned American "family finding" model that tries to locate people related to the young person (aunts, cousins) who could have a role in their life. Whilst the REA does not necessarily acknowledge a shift in policy priorities, it stresses that mentoring programmes support the development of effective relationship skills (Munson et al., 2010). During the interviews, many mentors and mentees

talked about the importance of establishing good relationships to address care leavers' needs and achieve positive outcomes.

Emotional and mental health

Some strategic informants acknowledged that some care leavers have to deal with loneliness and isolation whilst transitioning to independent living. One indicated that the care leavers' cohort was generally reluctant to engage with mental health services, and that access to the drop-in services was difficult for those living outside the city centre. Some care leavers interviewed for this review indicated that their mentor supported their health and general well-being, notably through attending appointments with them if needed. Others indicated either that they had no need or that they preferred not to involve their mentor in this domain. Yet, the REA indicates that mentoring programmes contribute to improve several outcomes linked to mental health such as increased levels of self-confidence in mentees (Scannapieco and Painter, 2014) and reduced social isolation (Mendes, 2011).

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Innovation

Whilst innovation was rarely mentioned by strategic informants, some clearly stated that it is a core element on both the government's and many organisations' current agenda as a means to improve services that have failed to support care leavers in the past. An example of this is the Children's Social Care Innovation programme. This is testing several innovative elements such as the use of impact bonds and Care Trusts. For instance, a Trust would be delivering leaving care services outside of the local authority with greater autonomy in order to streamline the decision-making process. According to one strategic informant, such an approach would also support a dedicated ring-fenced resource that is entirely focused on care leavers and cannot be directed to other areas of social care that have shortages. There is a sense amongst some strategic informants that the government is looking for new models to improve outcomes through delivering practical and emotional support to care leavers. Collaboration with other parties, such as the NHS or citizens, is perceived positively. Innovation was not mentioned by mentors and mentees. Furthermore, it was only mentioned in the American context in the REA (Scannapieco and Painter, 2014). Policy innovation features strongly in the British literature. Nonetheless, REAs have a narrow focus and innovation was not prominent when considering mentoring programmes for care leavers.

2.1.2 SERVICE PROVISION

Most of the strategic informants indicated that budgetary cuts were impacting negatively on the services delivered to care leavers. One strategic informant noted that some services had experienced a 40 per cent cut in the last four years and recent austerity measures also impacted on the number of service providers, especially in the local voluntary sector. Consequently, in some areas there is a more limited choice of providers and growing needs with increasing numbers of asylum seekers and late entrants. This is a challenge as some commissioners

identified that it is important to give care leavers choices. Other strategic informants suggested that funding is still available but is increasingly hard to access. Consequently, new programmes require a strong business case. One strategic informant indicated that many councils would probably consider a mentoring programme as something nice to have, rather than something they must have, and may not realise the savings they could make by investing in it. Some strategic informants also pointed out that funding could be drawn from various sources. For instance, funding could be sought from bodies that have within their constitution a requirement to fulfil social responsibility programmes (e.g., some social housing providers). However, one strategic informant argued that multiple sources of funding bring complexity as they come with numerous lines of reporting and accounting. It was suggested that multiple sources of funding should be avoided as more time is spent satisfying the funders than the recipients.

One strategic informant indicated that there was a will to embed the concept of corporate parenting more broadly throughout all local authorities. According to this person, people working with children's services have an understanding of the concept of corporate parenting, but the rest of the local authority does not. For instance, housing services sometimes take decisions that undermine the work done by children's services with care leavers. Another strategic informant suggested that the caseload is so high that services do not have the time to triangulate the information between services, and therefore rely on the young person to provide an accurate account of their current situation.

Several strategic informants recognised caseload prevented Personal Advisors (PAs) from providing quality support to care leavers. One strategic informant indicated that PAs may have caseloads of up to 30 care leavers. Another strategic informant noted that the government is currently looking at new ways to provide face-to-face and emotional support for care leavers. Yet, there could be a slight shift to the current role of a PA, where they would become facilitators to a network of support rather than the provider. Whilst the current policy priority is to facilitate and maintain relationships that exist, there is a sense amongst some strategic informants that an intergenerational mentoring programme could complement the role of PAs.

2.1.3 OBJECTIVES

Through the interviews, a number of issues were identified by strategic informants as being important when they consider commissioning services for care leavers. In addition to the policy priorities outlined above, commissioners involved in this research identified four key commissioning objectives. These were:



- **Consistency with goals and vision.** There is a broad consensus amongst strategic informants that the commissioner and service provider need to have a shared understanding of the aims and ambition the organisation/local authority has for young people. It is also important to have shared values, such as those around young people's participation in decision making and their voices being central to programme management and improvement. One key informant stated that they would like to have an alliance between them and the service providers, one that focuses on outcomes and offers meaningful engagement to young people.
- **Sustainability of relationships and funding.** Most strategic informants indicated that the sustainability of the relationship between mentor and mentee is key to a mentoring programme. For many, another important element of sustainability is the availability of funding. The short-term nature of funding is perceived as a challenge for some commissioners. A few stated that they have a preference for collaborative approaches involving partners beyond the city council (e.g., civil society).
- **Quality of the organisation and external relationships.** Commissioners will judge the quality of the organisation they will be working with (e.g., Ofsted scrutiny). This includes an in-depth understanding of care leavers and the challenges they encounter. Strategic informants indicated that they would scrutinise the organisation's safeguarding procedures, processes to recruit volunteers, level of support provided to mentors, and the level of investment made into the relationships between the mentor and the young person. It was also noted by some that relationships are central to the successful commissioning of the programme (i.e., good relationships between the organisation and the local authority). One interviewee argued that having a lead person who is well connected and organises the provision of services is very important. Communication lines need to be clear.
- **Value for money.** All commissioners agreed that the service has to be financially competitive and support better outcomes for care leavers. There is a strong focus on outcomes in the general discourse of most strategic informants. One emphasised that their focus is on the outcomes generated, rather than the process.

2.2 KEY FEATURES OF THE PROGRAMME AND ADDED VALUE

Interviews with strategic informants, mentors and mentees explored the most appealing features of the Grandmentors programme. They can broadly be organised under two overarching themes: its intergenerational feature and its capacity to act as a bridge towards 'normal' life. Both themes are examined in more detail here.



2.2.1 THE ADDED VALUE OF INTERGENERATIONAL MENTORING

The age of the mentors (over 50) is a central element of the Grandmentors' model. One of the principles underpinning the programme is that recruiting older volunteers with a higher level of social capital fosters access to a wider support network and community of support, as outlined by the 'theory of change' produced by Volunteering Matters. Several advantages to intergenerational mentoring were mentioned throughout the interviews with strategic informants and mentors, of which the age of mentors was perceived by all involved as the biggest strength of the programme.

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First, the age of the mentors is associated with maturity and reliability. For a large proportion of strategic informants, being more mature makes mentors more trustworthy. They have the maturity to commit to a programme and therefore the mentorship has better chances to last for a period of time that is useful to the care leaver. Furthermore, some strategic informants noted that mentoring programmes involving peers or students have often failed because of lack of reliability on behalf of the mentors. Most of the strategic informants associate the age of a mentor with availability and flexibility. There is a sense that older mentors will have more time and will be able to put in more effort to build a relationship. A few further indicated that mentors can be available at times when professionals are not, such as evenings and weekends. Nevertheless, the evaluation conducted by Fox et al. (2013) indicates that Grandmentors are usually busy people. Some volunteers are still in part-time or full-time employment and those who are retired have nonetheless eventful schedules and numerous other social commitments.

The age of the mentor also means they have more life experience. They can act as a 'grandparent' and establish a relationship with the young person. Several strategic informants have pointed out that this might be particularly helpful as young people leaving care may not have good relationships with their parents. Indeed, a strategic informant remarked that "engaging with care leavers is more easily made by people who do not look like, sound like, speak like a parent". A few strategic informants suggested that an additional element to intergenerational mentoring was that the care leavers' usual professional support group is mostly composed of young social workers. Consequently, the age of the mentor creates a further distinction with those in the official support network for care leavers. One strategic informant added that the intervention was filling a gap because no other services were offering intergenerational relationships. According to some strategic informants, those taking a grandparent's role are usually associated with experience and patience. However, one pointed out that this analogy must be used with caution as care leavers could have had a traumatic experience with their own grandparents. Furthermore, several mentors acknowledged that using such an analogy may be misleading for the young person as a grandparent is not someone who leaves after one year, which is the duration of the mentorship. Nevertheless, such a comparison between Grandmentors and grandparents could be used in fundraising and advertising, as suggested by a strategic informant.

According to a number of strategic informants, employment is a strong priority (often after accommodation) for local authorities working with care leavers. In some areas, the Grandmentors (GM) programme is intentionally used to establish links between care leavers and mentors involved in local businesses. It is assumed that the mentor will transfer various employment skills to the care leaver and possibly support them in finding a job or work placement. Another element raised by a strategic informant is that care leavers are often inspired to become youth workers or teachers (i.e., adults they know). Consequently, mentors from local and other businesses can become important figures for care leavers and broaden their perspectives and aspirations. Finally, the age difference between mentors and mentees is perceived by one strategic informant as a way to prevent the development of inappropriate relationships.

2.2.2 PROVIDING BRIDGES TO NORMAL COMMUNITY LIFE

The mentoring programme is perceived by many of the strategic informants as a way for local authorities to support care leavers to establish connections with other members of the community and engage in activities that are not otherwise accessible to them (e.g., go to local sports club, fishing, playing golf, etc.). Some also acknowledged that local authorities, as a corporate parent, struggle to arrange activities that would otherwise be part of children's lives.

It was noted by most mentors and strategic informants that the success of the GM scheme depends on how young people perceive the relationship they have with their mentor. Many strategic informants indicated that the mentors should be seen as being 'outside of the system'. It is often the case that the mentor is the only adult in a care leaver's life who is not being paid to be there. Indeed, even if a key worker or social worker goes the extra mile for a young person, the basis of their relationship still remains professional. Similarly, some mentees emphasised that their mentor was the only adult they encountered who did not have access to their file and past history. This provides grounds to build a more equal relationship.

The Grandmentors programme is about supporting care leavers on their path towards independent living. According to some strategic informants and mentees, it addresses needs such as support with education, budgeting, paying bills, cooking, applying for jobs, keeping faith, language skills, or parenting. It replicates the type of support usually provided by parents or grandparents. The case studies provided by Volunteering Matters and evaluation conducted by Fox et al. (2013) point out that a deficit in confidence and self-esteem are amongst the most common needs. Furthermore, the review of some case studies points out that several mentees suffer from learning disabilities, poor health, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Most mentors value the concept of volunteering in a 'grandparent role' and appreciate the opportunity to 'give back' to the community. This was also apparent through some of the case studies provided for the review. The structure of the mentoring intervention was reported to suit the needs of all mentees interviewed, with the intervention designed to be long-term and non-intensive, and providing another option for young people leaving care to receive support and develop educationally and emotionally.



2.3 THE INTERVENTION

This section explores different elements of the Grandmentors programme that may have an impact on the quality of the service delivered and its anticipated outcomes. They include the target population, the best time to enrol care leavers, and the length of the intervention. This addresses three of the research questions outlined at the beginning of this review:

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1. For whom does the Grandmentors programme prove most effective?
2. At what point in a young person's life is it likely that mentoring would have the most positive impact when leaving care?
3. Does the intensity and duration of the mentoring intervention have an impact on outcomes achieved?

2.3.1 TARGET POPULATION

The programme engages with a wide mix of young people from different backgrounds. All strategic informants agreed that the programme was suitable for care leavers who first and foremost expressed an interest in having a mentor. This is consistent with key findings from the REA that emphasise the importance of motivation and are consistent with the GM approach, which verifies that the young person is keen to be part of the programme before doing a referral.

There is broad agreement amongst strategic informants that asylum seekers generally engage well with the programme (though it should be noted that numbers of asylum seekers who have engaged so far is very small). One strategic informant remarked that asylum seekers often have a loving family in their country of origin as opposed to care leavers born in the UK who have often suffered abuse and neglect by adults and may have had negative experiences with children services. Furthermore, unaccompanied minors often arrive in the UK alone and have no other network available to them. Some strategic informants pointed out that asylum seekers can be perceived as being more motivated as they engage well with mentors and aspire to get an education; they are overall more open to help. However, a few strategic informants were reluctant to make general statements about some groups of care leavers engaging better than others, especially given the small numbers involved in the programme to date. They noted that there were also very successful cases with care leavers born in the UK and that some asylum seekers would not engage well with the programme.

One strategic informant indicated that the programme also works well for young mothers with young babies. They tend to be single and have no other support whilst they are transitioning to parenthood.

More prominent in the interviews with strategic informants were the groups of care leavers for which the programme is not suitable. They include young people with complex health needs, are in prison, or involved with gangs. Other schemes are available to them. Nevertheless, some strategic informants are keen for the programme to involve care leavers with higher needs as they are the hardest to reach. One noted that care leavers involved with the criminal justice

system and/or gangs would benefit from mentoring. The risk management, referral, and matching processes would ensure that mentor and mentee are adequately suited. Volunteering Matters started exploring this direction recently. Indeed, the minutes of a Board meeting (January 2017) mention a match between a mentor and a care leaver currently serving a prison sentence.

Several strategic informants noted that GM may also not be suitable for young people with considerable input from various agencies as they already have numerous adults intervening in their lives. One strategic informant pointed out that it might not be constructive for a young person to access too much help as they might end up receiving too many potentially differing messages.

Furthermore, the programme is deemed by most strategic informants to not be suitable for care leavers who are going through a very chaotic phase, or in crisis, as it would not be beneficial to add an additional element to their life at that stage. Often, care leavers experiencing a crisis do not keep appointments. However, this is not the rule as GM has engaged with young people in crisis in the past. Several strategic informants and mentors also stated that some young people may not be ready for the programme, and therefore will not benefit from it. Whilst strategic informants struggled to provide a definition of “being ready”, one pointed out that a care leaver who goes missing every night probably is not ready. Nonetheless, one strategic informant emphasised that some care leavers will become ready with time. There is anecdotal evidence that some may take up to two years to be ready to engage with the programme. One mentor stated that all care leavers are appropriate mentees – it is more about an effective matching process, allocating an appropriate mentor with whom the young person will engage.

Finally, a few strategic informants mentioned that some young people also decide that mentoring is not for them. As an optional opt-in programme, GM offers a mentor to care leavers who have expressed an interest in it. Some strategic informants acknowledged that young people leaving care are often quite keen to take their independence and remove themselves from the voluntary and statutory services. They have often had many adults intervene in their lives (one mentee had 34 social workers) and want to manage the transition to adulthood alone. Nevertheless, a strategic informant pointed out that some may find the transition more challenging than expected. It is therefore important to be flexible and allow young people to re-engage with the services at a later stage if needs be.

2.3.2 BEST TIME TO ENROL CARE LEAVERS

It was recognised by a majority of strategic informants that the 18th birthday milestone is a difficult time for care leavers. Their service provision drops drastically, and the term “falling off a cliff” was often used to describe this period. Most strategic informants therefore suggested that the best time to enrol care leavers on a mentoring programme would be six months before their 18th birthday. This period would allow young people to establish a relationship with a mentor, who would assist them with the transition to independent living.



Other strategic informants argued that the programme should be introduced to care leavers earlier, from the age of 16. There were two arguments supporting this suggestion. One draws on the assumption that it can take children in care up to two years to establish a relationship with an adult. The other is that Personal Advisors are introduced at 16 years old. This is considered to be a good time to introduce adults who will support transition.

All mentees stated that they would have benefitted from beginning mentoring support at a younger age, with the average age to commencing the relationship reported as 16 years old. There is no information in the literature related to the optimum age to commence mentoring young people leaving care.

However, the programme primarily relies on the young person's will to engage. Consequently, the best time to enrol care leavers is simply when they want to. This also means that care leavers can be enrolled after they are 18.

2.3.3 DURATION OF THE INTERVENTION

Volunteering Matters requests that mentors and mentees commit to spending a couple of hours fortnightly, or one hour per week, together for one year. Mentors can decide to go beyond that minimal commitment. It is difficult to determine the length of the programme that appears to be the most useful for the care leaver. Here, a few strategic informants emphasised the importance of a care leaver being empowered to decide if they want the relationship to stop. This is congruent with a case study included in the minutes of a Board meeting (July 2015), which stipulates that mentor and mentee were given the chance to opt out from the programme after a six-week trial. Some mentorships can be quite short (e.g., six months) if they are very purposeful. For instance, a young person may require support with CVs and job applications in order to gain employment. This relationship could terminate after six months and yet be deemed successful. In reality, mentorships tend to last longer and evolve with time. Most strategic informants and mentors pointed out that as trust builds, the relationship evolves and new needs can be addressed. Some strategic informants link outcomes with the intensity and duration of the mentorship. It is assumed (but not evidenced) that the longer the relationships, the better the outcomes. It is also important to note that the programme continues beyond the duty of a council. For example, local authorities must support care leavers until they are 21 or 25 if they are in education or training. If a care leaver drops out of education after 21, the local authority is no longer required to support them. Yet, GM continues to support those young people through mentoring if they are enrolled in the programme.



2.4 IMPLEMENTATION

Different models of GM are emerging in different areas. Overall, based on findings from the strategic informants, this is due to care leavers having different needs, different social care teams, and different people implementing the programme. Indeed, different boroughs will have different demographics. One strategic informant pointed out that mentors in Islington are more affluent and more usually retired than those in Hounslow. The latter often work at the airport in shifts, which for them means that Saturday is a working day. This has implications for training, for instance.

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The way the programme operates supports its ability to be embedded in broader services. In this, the GM coordinator plays an important role in establishing relationships with members of the social care team and promoting the programme in order to obtain referrals. Some strategic informants have also emphasised that having a coordinator well-embedded in the social care team also supports better matches between mentors and mentees. According to several strategic informants, processes are in place and efforts are made to build a relationship between the GM coordinator and members of the social care team.

This section discusses the key challenges to implantation identified through the interviews with strategic informants, mentors and mentees, and the Rapid Evidence Assessment. Some strategic informants indicated that other mentoring programmes have had issues with referrals, the recruitment of mentors, and the matching process.

2.4.1 REFERRALS

The relationship between the GM coordinators and social workers in the Leaving Care Team is key to obtaining referrals. Whilst referrals can come from other services or organisations, the Leaving Care Team is particularly important. Most of the strategic informants reported a good working relationship between GM and the Leaving Care Team. However, this has not always been the case as noted in minutes of Board meetings. Indeed, the minutes indicate that despite several attempts to engage with the Leaving Care Team in one particular area, no referrals were received from them. The programme wound down in that area and operational work was transferred to another area (NB: here, there is no evidence to support a link between those two elements).

According to a number of strategic informants, it is important that GM coordinators meet with local managers on the team and spend time discussing the referral process at the early stages of implementation. It is also essential that the coordinator builds good working relationships with the social care team as they will be the ones talking to care leavers about the GM programme. Sharing a physical space can support this process. Some strategic informants noted that the social care team were a little reluctant at first to make referrals, but opened up to the programme after having met the coordinator. One strategic informant reported that trust in the programme also drastically increased after a few mentees reported positive outcomes to the

social care teams. Consequently, word of mouth amongst the social care team, as well as care leavers, is particularly important.

In general, referrals follow a process that ensures that the care leavers are keen to join the programme. It follows a number of steps. First, the Personal Advisor (PA) or social worker mentions the programme to the care leaver. If they are interested, a meeting is organised between the GM coordinator, the young person, and their PA or social worker. The coordinator will evaluate whether the care leaver is keen to engage with a mentor, or if this is being pushed by the PA or social worker against the care leaver's wishes. The PA or social worker will then make a referral. After the referral, the GM coordinator meets with the young person and goes through a script that supports the identification of areas where they would like support (e.g., CV, part-time jobs, keeping them in college, support with immigration status). The young person is always given a way to opt out during the first meeting. It is likewise emphasised that the programme is voluntary. This is in line with best practice identified in the REA (Kersley and Estep, 2014). Indeed, young people must be prepared to invest in the mentoring relationship. The programme ensures that the care leaver is aware of its voluntary nature and is given an option to withdraw on several occasions. This rigorous process takes time and investment.

Nevertheless, getting young people through the front door can be a challenge. Some strategic informants indicated that this can be particularly difficult if the care leaver had a negative experience of children's services and the programme is associated with the city council. Furthermore, other programmes for care leavers have a high level of dropouts.

2.4.2 RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF MENTORS

The recruitment of mentors is mostly achieved through word of mouth and advertising (e.g., flyers, ads in local and national newspapers or public transport, Facebook, LinkedIn). Some strategic informants indicated that the recruitment of mentors is not a challenge for GM as the programme has a steady stream of applications.

Recruitment of the mentors follows a strict screening process. The coordinator's first contact with a potential mentor is often on the telephone, after an enquiry is made. This conversation provides them with an idea of the mentor's background, occupation, and allows the coordinator to explain the principles underpinning GM. They will then send an application form with an information sheet containing details about the role of a mentor and GM as a programme. The applicant then fills out an application form. If the application is successful, they are invited to a pre-training meeting, which is in fact a rigorous two-hour interview. The coordinator then checks the applicant's references and criminal record and invites them to attend the training session. During training, the coordinator observes how the applicant interacts with other trainees, how they react to different topics, and how they behave during breaks. After the training session, the coordinator meets face to face with the mentor. This is the opportunity for the coordinator to challenge the future mentors on things they may have said. The initial training session is also important as it offers an opportunity to get to know future mentors, their



skills and competencies, as well as their interests. This session is not delivered consistently across sites, as it varies in length (one and a half or two days), and the days of the week it is on offer.

The training session is often sufficient to support a self-deselection process for the mentors. Some will struggle to commit to a training session, demonstrating that they probably do not have the time to commit to a mentee. Others will withdraw their application after training as they decide that the programme is not for them. The recruitment and training of mentors is a particularly important aspect of the programme as volunteers will be working with care leavers who often are vulnerable young people. Whilst it is not common, some applications from mentors are rejected. Past rejections include volunteers who expected to be paid or obviously do not like young people, and are therefore not suitable to work with them.

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The intense training provided to mentors is perceived positively by most strategic informants. Some remarked that this makes the programme more trustworthy. Overall, there is agreement that the recruitment and training of mentors is rigorous. Most mentors stated that the training received when joining the Grandmentors programme was generally appropriate in terms of length and content, particularly compared with training received for other volunteering roles. Yet, some strategic informants pointed towards other mentoring programmes that have much longer training sessions. For instance, one strategic informant mentioned the Pure Insight Volunteer Mentoring Programme coordinated by Stockport as being a successful programme for care leavers. According to their website, they operate a 10-week training programme of three hours per week. Likewise, the Care Leavers Association runs a peer-mentoring programme that includes 10 modules on independent living, which is attended by mentors and mentees. This also allows them to start establishing a relationship. Some mentors stated that the structure and functioning of the care system was not covered in sufficient detail for mentors who have no knowledge of social care services. It was also suggested by several mentors that the knowledge and experience of mentors with relevant backgrounds and skill sets could be better utilised as peer-support. One strategic informant indicated that the programme exploits the professional skills of current mentors (e.g., GPs or lawyers).

Nonetheless, the programme aims to offer some level of continuous training to the mentors, through inviting different professionals to speak at their monthly support meeting or during coffee mornings (e.g., independent visitors, psychologists to talk about how to deal with escalating behaviour and if the young person kicks off). Some needs are identified during the support meetings and coordinators use their network to invite professionals. However, there is a general sense that training needs are not identified in a systematic manner. In line with suggestions by Scannapieco and Painter (2014), there was consensus amongst mentors that further ongoing training, particularly in relation to drugs and engaging young people from minority ethnic groups, would be of benefit. It was noted by some mentors that online training was good due to ease of access. Meanwhile, some strategic informants acknowledged that training is currently being reviewed by Volunteering Matters.



2.4.3 MATCHING MENTORS AND MENTEES

Matching is a sensitive phase for a mentoring programme. This is where other programmes have encountered ‘teething issues’. Furthermore, several strategic informants stated that mentoring programmes involving young people as mentors (e.g., students, care leavers aged 20 to 24) are difficult to sustain as mentors can be unreliable. There are other difficulties with peer-mentoring, including ethical issues associated with the fact that the programme could harm some mentors. Indeed, a strategic informant noted that some care leavers involved as mentors experienced difficulties as the mentorship made them relive traumatic events.

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Coordinators are responsible for matching the mentors and mentees. They get to know them through the various meetings and training sessions, and attempt to match mentees’ ambitions with mentors’ skills and competencies. It is also about matching interests or needs. For example, matching a care leaver who needs educational support with a teacher, or a young person in the midst of a court case with a lawyer. However, it is acknowledged that the relationship needs chemistry to work and that there is no ‘written formula’. They use their professional judgement. Nevertheless, there might be elements in the mentor’s or mentee’s life of which they are unaware and will impact the quality of the relationship.

Matches usually involve considerations around gender and race. This becomes particularly complicated when the mentors’ demographics (i.e., majority of females) does not entirely fit with the care leavers’ population. A number of mentors also stated that it should be acknowledged most mentors are White British and most mentees are not; there were suggestions that young people from minority ethnic groups may want to work with a mentor who shares their ethnicity or cultural background. Similarly, it was suggested that some mentoring relationships are strained due to extensive language barriers. Coordinators will ask the mentees and mentors if they have a preference in terms of gender. There is a general sense from the interviews with strategic informants that a good match entails the same gender, culture and race. Strategic informants indicated that most male care leavers say they do not have a preference, yet their social worker would state that a male figure would be best. However, one strategic informant emphasised that crossing genders has proven very successful in the criminal justice system, where young male offenders engaged better with female mentors. Furthermore, a mentee indicated that it did not matter to her that her mentor did not have the same ethnicity.

There is no waiting list for mentees as such, but the process of meeting and matching the young person usually takes six to eight weeks. The process can be slow as their PA only has the duty to meet with them every four to six weeks. Consequently, some care leavers are ‘on hold’, and others will drop in and out of the programme. There is a general understanding amongst strategic informants that matches should not be made on the basis that someone is available. Sometimes, mentors and mentees have to wait until a good match is made.

Once the coordinator has identified a good match, the mentor and mentee meet together with the social worker and GM coordinator. This meeting is used to discuss important concepts such as the limits of confidentiality, especially in the case of disclosure. In general, the mentor



receives very little information about the mentee, although this appears to vary across boroughs. Some coordinators will hand over a small amount of background information to the mentors, especially if there are any behavioural concerns. Others will not provide any information on the young person's past experience as it is relatively easy to become caught up in such information. Moreover, young people appeared to value the fact that mentors do not have access to their social care case history – the opportunity to tell their own story and be in control of what information is shared with mentors is reportedly important to mentees. In line with this, one mentor emphasised the importance of this new perspective for young people – a 'fresh pair of eyes' from someone who is not a professional.

During their first meeting, the mentor and mentee complete a Getting to Know You questionnaire that focuses on elements such as determination, health, well-being, and education. The mentor and mentee agree goals for the mentorship and share them with the GM coordinator. Some mentors suggested that this element of the mentoring intervention needed to be improved as having goal plans felt like a 'tick box' exercise. They further suggested that grandparents would not write goal plans. Nevertheless, goals-setting is what distinguishes mentoring from befriending; the latter is less formal and tends to last longer in time (Kersley and Estep, 2014)

The matching process was described as solid and well thought out by mentors, although it was stated by all mentees that they were not involved in this process. Research in this area (Kersley and Estep, 2014) suggests that young people should be actively involved and encouraged to exercise choice during the matching process.

2.4.4 SUPPORTING MENTORS AND MENTEEES

Another important role of the coordinator is to support mentors. For instance, coordinators send a monthly update on the programme and organise monthly support meetings. Some will also give the mentors a call on a monthly basis to check that the relationship is going well. A strategic informant noted that frequent contact is important in order to provide mentors with the necessary level of support, especially if they are encountering challenges with their mentees. A common challenge is mentees disengaging from the relationships, missing meetings, and/or not returning calls. When this happens, coordinators try to meet with the mentees to determine what is going on. It is often possible to find mentees in the children's services reception as they come to collect their weekly allowance money. Overall, the coordinator is a pro-active support to both mentor and mentee. One mentee also indicated that they would appreciate monthly meetings where young people could come together and form supportive friendships with other young people who understand the experience of being in care.

Mentors reported support and supervision as generally good, although it was noted that Grandmentors staff are often very busy, and contacting them can be difficult at times. Several mentors suggested that more written (or electronic) material in the form of a resource pack would be beneficial in terms of providing mentees with advice and information on topics such as housing and benefits. Monthly mentor meetings were reported to occasionally lack clarity



and structure, and to not offer appropriate time for case discussion and peer support with issues that mentors might be experiencing with mentees. It was suggested by several mentors that formal structured peer mentoring sessions for mentors may help address this. Effective supervision is noted as particularly important within the findings of the REA (Scannapieco and Painter, 2014).

2.4.5 ENGAGING WITH OTHER SERVICES

Grandmentors was established as a programme that supports care leavers through their transition to independent living. Some strategic informants perceive the programme as complementary, yet independent, to mainstream services. Many of them stated that it was important that the mentor was perceived as being ‘out of the system’ in order to support a successful relationship. When GM coordinators meet the care leavers to talk about the programme, they strongly emphasise that they are not part of the Leaving Care Team and are separate to the council but work alongside them. It is important that the care leaver understands that the mentoring programme comes from Volunteering Matters. This distinction together with the extent to which the mentor should or should not engage with other services working with their mentee are not homogenously understood across the different local authorities.

Overall, several strategic informants expect the programme to support care leavers in a way that is aligned with their pathway plan. Minutes from a meeting of the Grandmentors Project Board (October 2014) indicate that the programme became embedded in the care leavers’ pathway plan in one borough. This is confirmed by some strategic informants that noted that the mentorship is mentioned in the pathway plan, and the frequency of contact between mentor and mentee (collected via diary sheets) is communicated to their PA or social worker. Most mentors stated it would be beneficial to have more contact with the professionals involved in young people’s lives, particularly social workers. It was suggested that more joined up working would allow mentors to understand ‘the bigger picture’ whilst also enhancing mentoring intervention for young people, which supports the research conducted by Scannapieco and Painter (2014). Some strategic informants indicated that mentors sometimes attend the pathway plan review meetings to support the care leaver. Several mentors reported being in contact with the professionals working with their mentee, stating that this was useful and they did not feel it compromised the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship.

Yet, other strategic informants indicated that the mentoring programme could not be part of the pathway plan as it could jeopardize the mentor-mentee relationship – the mentorship should be driven by what young people want rather than what contributes to positive outcomes on their pathway plan. Several mentors acknowledged that mentees are likely to view them as ‘just another person’ involved in their care, with some young people stating that their initial assumption was that mentors were part of social care and worked alongside their social worker or personal adviser. One mentee mentioned that many adults had been involved in her life and that it took her time to become open to the mentoring relationship. Several mentors indicated that when mentees learn that mentors are volunteers who do not get paid for their time, this breaks down barriers and improves trust and, consequently, the quality of the mentoring

relationship. Furthermore, it was acknowledged by both mentors and strategic informants that this situation is not always appropriate as mentors are not professionals, and having contact but remaining detached could prove difficult. Several mentors and strategic informants also reported that communication with social workers, or other relevant agencies, can be done via Grandmentors staff, a mechanism that is reported to work well generally.

Overall, several strategic informants strongly emphasised that the involvement of the mentor with other services and their pathway plan should be decided by the young person.



2.5 MECHANISMS

2.5.1 MENTOR QUALITIES

Throughout the interviews and focus groups, mentors and mentees proposed a number of qualities needed by mentors in order to pave the way for a successful mentoring relationship. Honesty was suggested to be particularly important by most mentors and mentees, as was the ability to be a positive adult role model. Relevant research included in the REA is consistent with this (Ahrens et al., 2011; Greeson et al., 2015). Other characteristics that were frequently put forward included being assertive, positive and non-judgemental whilst ensuring that words and actions motivate mentees to work towards their goals. These characteristics are also in line with those discussed in the findings of the REA (Munson et al., 2010; Augsberger and Swenson, 2015). Several strategic informants have emphasised that mentors need to show persistence in order to convince care leavers that they will be a consistent figure in their lives. One mentor confirmed that they felt that they were being tested in the first few months and maintained that their role required patience and persistence. A case study reports the story of a successful mentorship that started with the mentee cancelling the first meeting and being 90 minutes late for the second one.

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Most mentees value the fact that mentors generally have more time to spend with mentees in comparison to most professionals, with this flexibility in terms of availability being attributed to the fact mentors are older people who are generally retired. Indeed, a relationship with an older person was described by some mentors as potentially enriching for young people leaving care as they are less likely to have frequent contact with people aged 50 or more. Mentees were reported to value the fact that mentors are older as they have more life experience, with many referring to mentors as parent or grandparent figures.

There were differing views amongst mentors on the primary role of a mentor, with participants generally split between viewing the role as that of a coach (helping young people help themselves) and that of a nurturing 'grandparent' with a willingness to hand-hold. Despite this, as mentioned previously, all mentors alluded to the importance of being patient when building an initial relationship with mentees.

2.5.2 MENTOR-MENTEE RELATIONSHIP

A high quality mentor-mentee relationship was suggested to be essential for effective mentoring by all mentors. This relationship begins with the allocation of mentors to mentees – referred to as the matching process. As mentioned above, all of the mentees interviewed stated that they were allocated a mentor and were not involved in the matching process. Several mentors also suggested that the natural chemistry between mentors and mentees must not be undervalued throughout the matching process.

Trust was described as essential when building a mentoring relationship by all mentors, with a suggestion from one mentor that this can take a minimum of three months to achieve. The

significance of trust for mentees was a recurring factor in six of the 12 papers included in the REA (Greeson and Bowen, 2008; Munson et al., 2010; Ahrens et al., 2011; Kersley and Estep, 2014; Augsberger and Swenson, 2015; Greeson et al., 2015).

All mentees stated that contact with mentors began at once or twice per week at the beginning of the relationship and subsequently reduced as the mentoring relationship progressed. The value young people place on consistent and frequent contact is discussed in the findings of the REA (Kersley and Estep, 2014), and several mentors alluded to the importance of mentors being a constant and dependable individual in the lives of mentees. In addition, several mentors referred to the importance of a longer-term relationship being more effective in bringing about change in young people, which is also consistent with the findings of the REA (Munson et al., 2010; Augsberger and Swenson, 2015).

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Some mentors also suggested that clear boundaries must be set when the mentor-mentee relationship is first formed and to ensure that an appropriate degree of separation is maintained. This is consistent with the findings of the REA (Kersley and Estep, 2014). One key informant noted that the GM coordinator's role also entails negotiating boundaries between mentors and mentees, and they may intervene at the mentor's demand to reassert them.

2.5.3 SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Throughout all mentor and mentee interviews, the nature of the support required by mentees and offered by mentors was discussed. Areas of support included assistance with finding employment, education and training, bidding for and finding accommodation, and attending medical appointments. These factors are consistent with the areas in which care leavers are reported to need support, as outlined in the findings of the REA (Munson et al.; 2010, Mendes, 2011).

It was suggested by some mentors that supporting young people to develop relatively basic skills in order to enable them to live independently can be a long journey, and for some young people this will be as far as things will go. It was also noted by several mentors that smaller steps must be acknowledged as receiving praise is particularly important for young people transitioning from care.



2.6 OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

It was acknowledged by both strategic informants and mentors that it would be very difficult to attribute causation to the GM programme. Indeed, the programme works with young people who are involved in numerous other services. One mentor stated that a young person's progress should not be solely attributed to the efforts of their mentor. Furthermore, the underlying principles of the programme (flexibility, confidentiality, mentor being out of the system) make it also difficult to work towards set outcomes. Most mentors stated that initial goals can take over a year to achieve, with some goals never met. However, a number of strategic informants indicated that they would expect to see a positive impact when looking at the young people's general outcomes, such as accommodation or employment, whilst acknowledging that the benefits would be incidental and organic.

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The following positive outcomes for care leavers were mentioned by different strategic informants:

- More confident to express their concerns
- More likely to find some work
- More likely to go to college and stay in college
- Making better use of public transport
- Have better mental health
- Have greater aspirations

Some minutes of Board meetings (e.g., January 2015) feature an update on impact measures such as 'education, employment and training' and 'confidence and well-being'. There was an overall agreement amongst strategic informants that the programme probably contributes to hard outcomes through supporting young people to achieve soft outcomes (e.g., improved self-esteem, improved self-confidence). Amongst mentors, there was general consensus that achieving outcomes and being able to see impact takes time. As a result, several mentors suggested that small steps should be acknowledged, such as mentees keeping to appointments and arriving on time, in order to motivate young people to continue their journey of personal development. Similarly, some strategic informants indicated that offering pleasure and social time could be considered as an outcome in itself. It was also suggested by several mentors that outcomes are often achievements or progress not written on goal plans. The progress made by care leavers and the emotional part of their journey can be difficult to capture and monitor. Nevertheless, case studies that capture such elements are an integral part of their Board meetings. It was noted by several key informants that monitoring and evaluation are important components as they guarantee that the programme is delivering what it intends to deliver and that the system can be adequately challenged. It also provides proof that outcomes are achieved.

2.7 SCALABILITY

Volunteering Matters is considering an expansion of the Grandmentors programme at a national level. A core part of their five-year vision, the expansion would aim to support over 2,900 young people leaving care across 20 local authorities in England.

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In a context where there is a drive to improve service provision for care leavers, word of mouth becomes a catalyst for service commissioning. One strategic informant reported looking at the services provided to care leavers by other local authorities before deciding what to commission. In this instance, the fact that Grandmentors had been running for a number of years and delivered in different local authorities was considered an important advantage. It brought confidence as the programme has a theory of change model and impact measure that made it easier to ‘sell’ to decision makers in the local authority. The programme had already been implemented and therefore held implementation lessons that could be shared. Furthermore, the programme being implemented in different local authorities means that there might be opportunities to create Communities of Practice (i.e., a group of people sharing and reflecting on their experiences in order to improve their practice). This component would bring another level to the programme.

Nonetheless, expanding a programme is challenging as the programme needs to retain its core principles whilst adapting to local contexts. One strategic informant noted that another mentoring programme for care leavers had recently cut down its delivery from five local authorities to one local authority in order to address ‘teething issues’ before the programme could be expanded. Whilst some elements of Grandmentors are firmly implemented as core elements of the programme (e.g., age of the mentor, target population, rigorous recruitment), others appear to vary depending on the local authority (e.g., referrals, training, level of engagement with other services). Moreover, one strategic informant argued that the current Grandmentors model would not work effectively if expanded nationally as its successes are reported to be primarily due to the relationships that have been created over time between Grandmentors staff and local services, rather than the actual delivery model. As stated in the findings of the REA, expansion of mentoring programmes must be done at a steady pace with effective planning (Scannapieco and Painter, 2014).

Finally, some strategic informants indicated that there was no clear national picture of the amount and type of mentoring programmes available for care leavers. Consequently, a map of service provision of mentoring programmes for care leavers would be useful to inform expansion plans.



3. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings outlined in chapter 2 of this report were presented to a project board established by Volunteering Matters to oversee this review. The findings were presented and discussed at a workshop in September 2017, at which a series of implications and recommendations for the future development of the Grandmentors programme were identified, discussed and agreed. These are examined separately in the following two sections. First, the key implications arising from the work are identified, providing a narrative – a discussion – of what the findings mean overall. This is followed by a series of recommendations; actions to be considered by Volunteering Matters as they develop and expand the programme.

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3.1 IMPLICATIONS

Over and above the limitations of the extant empirical evidence, there are a number of implications that arise from the review findings in terms of Volunteering Matters' plans to develop and expand the Grandmentors programme. It is clear that there are challenging times ahead for services aimed at young people leaving care: challenges arising from reductions in budgets/resources available to fund such services; from increasing numbers of young people in the care system and leaving care; and because of the changing profile of care leavers. Many people interviewed for this review identified the increasing number of unaccompanied children as a significant change to the profile of young people leaving care; and suggested that unaccompanied children have different experience of the care system, different needs, and different aspirations than other groups of care leavers. One strategic informant indicated that the general discourse may not reflect reality on the ground. Official data suggests that, while there has been an increase in the numbers of unaccompanied children in England, they still represent a significant minority of the leaving care population. It would be worth Volunteering Matters considering whether there might be some disconnect between perceptions and actual numbers of unaccompanied children, and the implications of such a disconnect in terms of positioning the Grandmentors programme. There are also a number of issues around the positioning of the programme, both internally and how it is proposed to external agencies such as commissioners. Some of these issues are more strategic in nature; others more operational. The review findings bring to light some difference of opinion or lack of clarity around the nature of mentoring as an intervention and its place within services for young people leaving care. Mentors and other Volunteering Matters interviewees raise questions around whether the programme should be positioned as 'part of the system', working alongside 'the system', or being 'outside the system'; and that this debate was fundamental to understanding what mentoring entailed in terms of the type of relationship it covers. Such debates are reflected in the wider literature around mentoring; both in terms of the similarities and differences between mentoring and befriending, and in terms of the differences between intentional, peer, and intergenerational mentoring. This debate is illustrated by an issue raised by interviewees in relation to the process of goal or objective setting between mentors and mentees. A number of



mentors questioned the need for, and process of, setting and agreeing goals or objectives for mentees, suggesting this was not consistent with the type of relationship being developed or was a ‘tick box’ exercise with little utility. One of the key differences identified in some of the academic literature between befriending and mentoring is around goal/objective setting. It is posited that mentoring involves goal setting whereas befriending does not. This suggests that mentors and others involved in the programme may have different views or understandings of mentoring as an intervention. Goal setting is also important because it is intended to empower mentees; mentees are given choice and opportunity to set goals relevant to them, and to ensure that appropriate support is provided by the mentor and the GM programme.

In relation to the process of matching mentees to mentors, a number of issues were raised that have significant implications for the development of the programme. Several interviewees identified a difference between mentors (typically White British and middle class) and mentees (more and increasingly diverse in terms of their background). It was not clear whether these differences were considered to have a material impact on the relationship or outcomes achieved through mentoring. More significantly, the matching process does not currently involve much choice for mentees who, typically, are presented with a matched mentor at the end of the matching process. This stands at odds with current policy developments in the field and with the empirical evidence, both of which suggest that mentees should be empowered to make choices about how and by whom they are mentored. Choice and clarity around the endpoint of mentoring relationships was also identified as an issue. The programme involves a formal period for mentoring relationships; although mentees may want/need the relationship to continue beyond this period, or may wish the relationship to change to be more akin to befriending or friendship. This suggests that some work is needed around clarity and choice at the entry and exit points of the programme.

The final implication arising from the review findings relates to scalability. It is clear that there are differences between local authorities in terms of how and why they do or might commission programmes such as Grandmentors, and whether Grandmentors would work alongside other forms of mentoring in local areas. It is also clear that there are differences between local Grandmentor schemes in how the programme is managed and delivered, and some areas where more standardised procedures might be valuable. Equally important is that the process of matching mentors and mentees – recognised as being key to the success of the relationship and to the achievement of outcomes – is a complex and lengthy process that involves a number of nuanced decisions and professional judgement. This suggests that some operational work on policies and procedures might be needed to support the development and expansion of the programme. It also suggests an organic, evolutionary expansion plan might be beneficial – the role of the coordinator is clearly key to the success of local schemes, and these roles take time to recruit and develop. It also suggests that the investment needed in, and the benefits arising from, the matching process should be highlighted as a fundamental part of the intervention.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The project board overseeing this review discussed and agreed a number of strategic and operational recommendations for the future development and expansion of the Grandmentors programme. These were:

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Strategic

Recommendation 1: Funding and expansion. Because of the upfront investment needed in the process of matching mentors and mentees, and given the need to ensure stability for young people leaving care in terms of their mentoring relationships, it was recognised and agreed that the expansion programme should focus on local authorities that would commit to commissioning the programme with an assurance that funding would be for more than one year. It was agreed that this, coupled with the wider implications identified in the section above, suggested that taking an organic, evolutionary, and targeted approach to expand the programme is likely to be a more successful and sustainable approach. Based on findings from the interviews with strategic informants, a map of the current provision in regard to mentoring programmes for care leavers could inform the expansion plan.

Recommendation 2: Evidence and outcomes. It was agreed that Volunteering Matters should use the extant evidence base more strategically in terms of communicating the effectiveness of mentoring and of the Grandmentors programme. It was recognised that the evidential gaps identified in the review should provide a framework for the commissioning of future research and evaluation. Over and above the extant evidence, it was also recognised that more work needed to be done to demonstrate outcomes arising from the programme (especially outside of London).

Recommendation 3: The nature of mentoring as an intervention and as delivered through Grandmentors. It was agreed that more work needed to be done around distilling and communicating the core of mentoring as an intervention and what it means for the programme; this means some work in terms of clarity of understanding and purpose of goal setting, and also the relationship between Grandmentors and the wider system of services for young people leaving care.

Recommendation 4: Policies and procedures. It was recognised that the flexibility afforded to local schemes has been key to the success of the programme to date, but would both limit and also present some challenges as the programme expands. It was agreed that resources needed to be committed in order to provide some systematic guidance and procedures as part of the expansion programme.



Operational

Recommendation 6: Entering, exiting and ending the mentor/mentee relationship. It was agreed that a more formalised and articulated process was needed around the referral and assessment process, recognising the role it played both in the process of matching mentors and mentees and to the outcomes achieved through mentoring. It was also recognised that Grandmentors invests a great deal of time in this process, and that the process was complex, nuanced and required a great deal of professional judgement. In addition to providing some clarity and specificity around the referral, assessment and matching process, it was also agreed that work needed to be done to provide clarity around the process of ending a mentoring relationship, particularly when the relationship developed into something more akin to befriending or a familiar/friendship relationship. It was also agreed that more work needed to be done on identifying the point at which Grandmentors engaged with young people leaving care. In particular, it was agreed that more work with local authorities was needed to ensure a smooth transition from care to a mentoring relationship, so that potential mentees were identified and engaged at least six months before they formally left the care system.

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Recommendation 7: Choice. It was recognised that mentees should have choice and ownership over decisions around how and by whom mentoring is delivered to them. It was agreed that different approaches could be trialled about how and the extent of choice that is delivered; with perhaps a choice of a minimum of two potential mentors being discussed with mentees.

Recommendation 8: Mentor training and support. A formal training programme is in place as part of the process of recruiting mentors, and it was recognised that this works well. Many local schemes run training and support sessions for mentors, but it was recognised that these varied in quality between schemes and were largely ad hoc and opportunistic in nature. It was agreed to work with mentors to identify their ongoing training and support needs, perhaps through a formal appraisal process, and to develop a more systematic training programme. It was also agreed to test whether a buddying system might be valuable to mentors.

Recommendation 9: Local boards. A key part of the expansion plan is the establishment of local boards to provide scrutiny and local input to the programme. In developing these boards, it was agreed that more consideration was needed on service user voice in these boards, and particularly whether former mentees might be recruited as board members, and/or some forum to enable mentees' views to be expressed and considered in the governance and management of local schemes and the programme overall. Interview findings also indicate that Communities of Practice could be established between local authorities to share lessons and improve implementation.

APPENDIX 1 LIST OF STRATEGIC INTERVIEWEES

Permission was granted by participants to be identified by name and/or their role.

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1. Lyn Baran, Programme Manager, CYP Health Service ReDesign, Children and Young People's Services, Suffolk County Council
2. Kathy Evans, CEO, Children England
3. Alice Frank, Manager of the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum/Catch 22
4. David Graham, National Director, The Care Leavers' Association
5. Liz Hassock, Grandmentors, London Borough of Hounslow
6. Susan Holden, Team Manager in the Children Looked After/Leaving Care team, Peterborough City Council
7. Denham Hughes, NEET Team Manager, Young People's Service, Communities Directorate, Peterborough City Council
8. Robert Macpherson, Policy Advisor, Department for Education
9. Sir Martin Narey
10. Anne Turner, Grandmentors, Volunteering Matters
11. Moksuda Uddin, Head of Corporate Parenting, London Borough of Hounslow
12. Senior Programme Manager – Innovation Lab, Nesta
13. Children's Commissioning, Manchester City Council
14. Essex County Council
15. London Borough of Islington
16. Volunteering Matters
17. Jecda Foundation



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